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On Dysentery
by

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Passed March 19th 1825

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Medical Faculty
in the
University of Pennsylvania
for the Degree of
Doctor of Medicine
by
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of Pennsylvania

On the symptoms and treatment of Dysentery as it appeared in Clearfield County Pennsylvania on the head Waters of the Susquehanna River during the months of July August September and part of October.

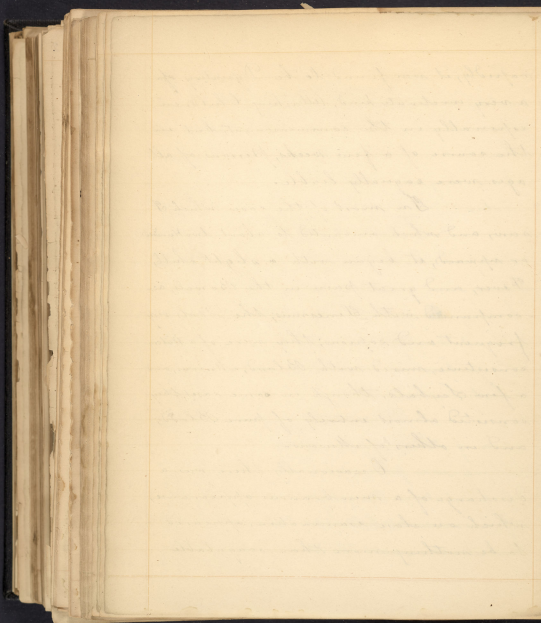
In the early part of the months specified above, and for some weeks before, there was a series of very wet weather, having ~~Rained~~ almost every other or every third day for some weeks; the intermediate days however were tolerably clear, with a hot burning Sun.

About the first of July, a few cases of this disease made their appearance, which was pronounced by the Physicians of that County at first, to be bad cases of Diarrhoea; but upon a more careful investigation, and the disease spreading

rapidly, it was found to be Dysentery of a very inveterate kind, Attacking Children, especially in the commencement, but in the course of a few weeks, Persons of all ages were equally liable.

In most of the cases which I saw, and which amounted to about two hundred or upwards, it began with a slight chill, Fever, and great pain in the Bowels, accompanied with Tenesmus; the stools very frequent and copious; they were of a Watery consistence, mixed with Blood, Mucus, and a few Scybala, though in some cases, they consisted almost entirely of pure Blood, and in others of Mucus.

Occasionally there was a Discharge of a membranous appearance, which on close examination, appeared to be nothing more than coagulable

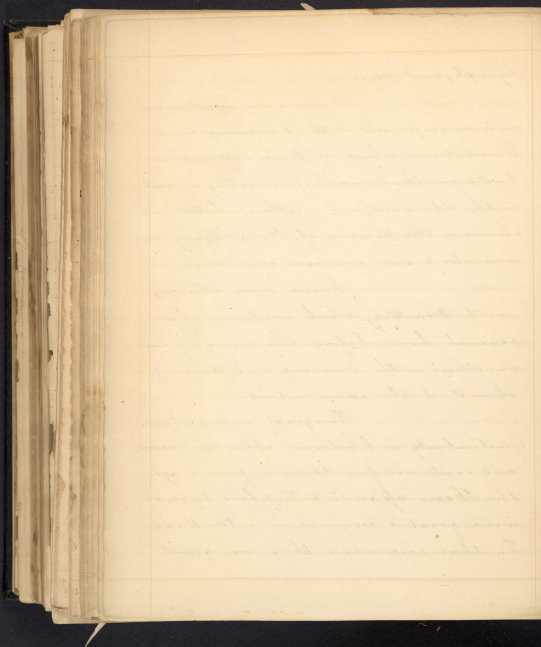


lymph, and Mucous.

It was in a great many cases accompanied with Flatulency, and Eructations, which at times left a sour taste in the Mouth, indicating an acid in the Stomach; and in others, a bitter taste, shewing the presence of Bile; Strangury, was also a very common symptom.

Some were attacked with Vomiting; which continued for several hours, before the purging came on; others with Vomiting, and Purging, almost at the same instant.

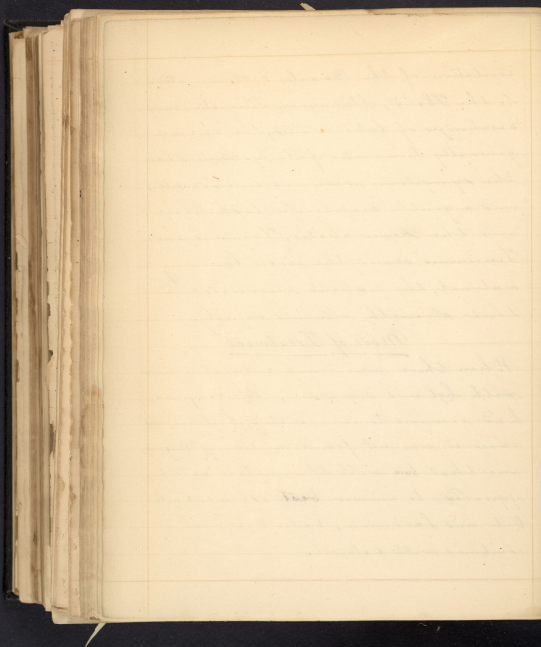
In a great many instances, (particularly in Children) after the Disease had continued for three or four Days, the Fever assumed a Typhoid type, and with great determination to the Head. In those cases where there was great



irritation of the Bowels, determination to the Head, Strangury, and involuntary discharges of fetid matter, the disease generally terminates fatally. But when the symptoms were more moderate, and a gentle Diaphoresis took place, and the Fever abated, Tormina and Tenesmus ceased the stools becoming natural, the patients recovered, and their strength returned rapidly.

Mode of Treatment

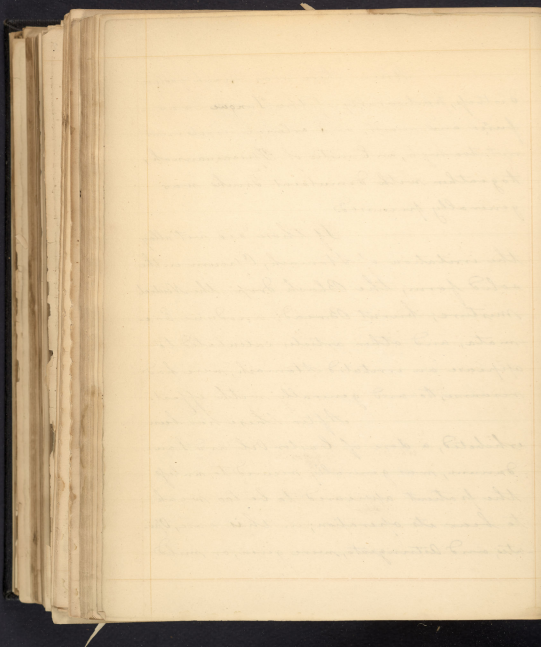
When there was much arterial excitement with hot and dry Skin, Bleeding was had recourse to immediately; but in most cases it was not found necessary; Purgings, and that ~~best~~ with the milder articles, appeared to answer best, such as Castor Oil and Laudanum, Castor Oil alone, or combined with Calomel.



When there was much gastric
distress, particularly if the Tongue was
furred and moist, and arterial excitement
not too high, an Emetic of Ipecacuanha,
together with Demulcent Drinks was
generally promised.

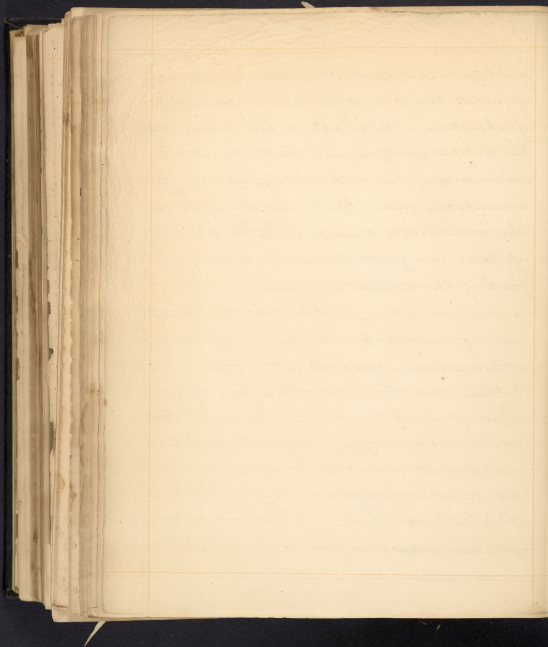
If these did not allay
the irritation of Stomach, Opium in the
solid form; the Black Drop; the Neutral
mixture; burnt Bread; anodyne Em-
-mata, and other articles calculated to
appease an irritated Stomach, were had
recourse to and generally with effect.

After these had been
exhibited, a dose of Castor Oil and Lau-
-danum, was generally resorted to, unless
the patient appeared to be too weak
to bear its operation; in this case, Opi-
-ates, and Astringents, were given, or mild



mucilaginous, and Opiate Enemata were made use of, untill they had so far recovered from a state of exhaustion as to be able to bear purging; when this condition existed recourse was had to cathartic medicines every two or three days, according to circumstances, giving Opates, and Astringents, on the intermediate days; or mild Opiate Enemata if there was great irritability in the lower part of the Alimentary canal.

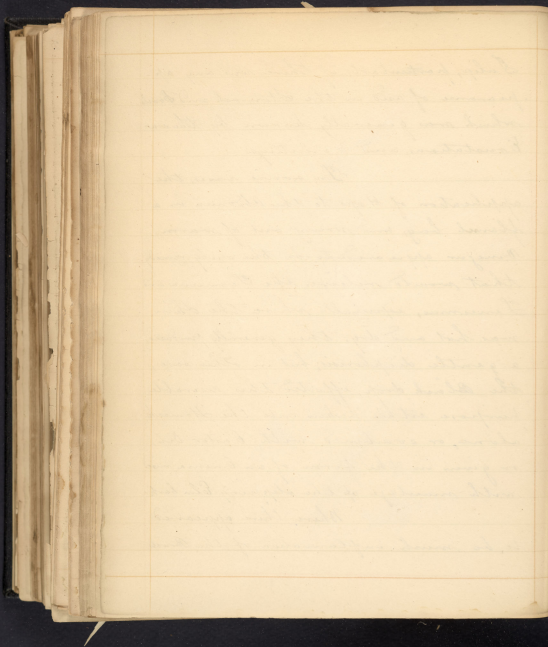
The best Astringents were found to be the Kino in tincture, either alone, or combined with Opium; and if there was Fever or Strangury, the Spirit of Nitre, was occasionally added with advantage. The Acetate of Lead with Calomel and Opium, in the form of a pill, were also given every 3^d 4th 5th or 6th hour according to circumstances, or when there was head to the Chalk



July, particularly if there was any appearance of acid in the Stomach and Bowels which was generally known by the sour Eructations, and Vomiting.

In some cases, the application of Hops to the Abdomen in a flannel bag, and wrung out of warm Vinegar appeared to be the only remedy that would relieve the Spasms and Tenesmus, especially where the Skin was hot and dry; they generally produced a gentle diaphoresis; but in other cases, the Black drop, effected this desirable purpose either taken into the Stomach alone, or combined with Castor Oil, or given in the form of an Enema mixed with mullein of the slippery Elm bark.

Where there appeared to be much inflammation of the Bowels

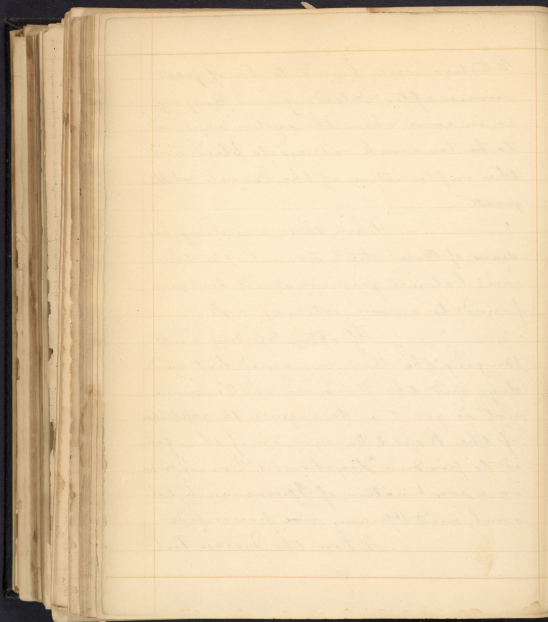


Blisters were found to be of great service after Bleeding and purging; or in cases where the system appeared to be too much reduced to bleed, and the inflammation of the Bowels still great.

When there was strong evidences of Bile (which was not often the case) Calomel given in small doses was found to answer extremely well.

If after Bleeding and purging the skin remained hot and dry, and the Tormina and Tension not so great as to require the application of the Hops & Vinegar, or if they failed to produce ^adiaphoresis, Dover's powder, or a combination of Ipecacuanah, Calomel, and Opium, were prescribed.

When the Disease took



on the Typhoid character, with a determination to the head, cold applications, Blisters to that part, and sponging the Body with warm Vinegar and Water, were used; stimuli being found injurious on account of the increased determination to the head, ~~was~~ but rarely employed.

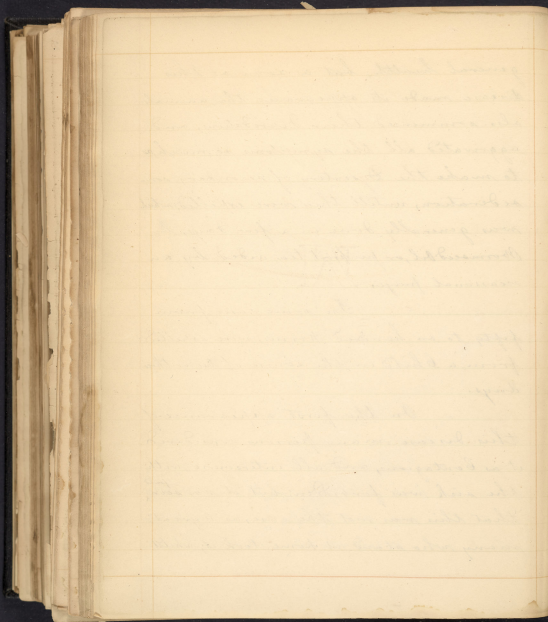
When there was a tendency to relapse from improper exposure, some mild diaphoretic was generally successful in preventing it.

Owing to the Diet of the Inhabitants of that part of the Country, consisting principally of Vegetables, and their permitting their children to eat a great deal of unripe Fruit, almost every Child that was attacked, with the Dysentery, was found to have Worms, which did not appear to injure their

general health; but as soon as this disease made its appearance the animals also commenced their Depredations, and aggravated all the symptoms so much, as to make the Dysentery of secondary consideration, untill they were expelled, which was generally done in a few days, by Wormseed Oil, or pinkroot tea, aided by an occasional purge.

In some cases from fifty to an hundred Worms, were expelled from a Child in the course of two or three days.

On the first appearance of this disease many persons considered it as contagious, and all intercourse with the sick was forbidden; but it was soon ^{found} that this was not the case, as a great many who staid at home, took it, whilst



many of those who went from House to House, setting up with, and nursing the sick were exempt from it; so much so that I believe there was not a man in this part of the County in which it raged with most violence, who did not think himself as safe in the Chamber of the sick, as out of it.

Epist. March 16th

1755

